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Validity Study of Estimates Regarding Soviet Policy

With Respect to Berlin

1. Estimates regarding Soviet policy with respect to Berlin were made in: NIE 81, "Probable Soviet Courses of Action with Respect to Germany Through Mid-1954," 22 May 1953; NIE 11-55, "Probable Soviet Response to the Ratification of the Paris Agreements," 1 March 1955; NIE 11-3-55, "Soviet Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action Through 1960," 17 May 1955; and NIE 11-13/1-55, "Review of Soviet Foreign Policy in the Light of the Geneva Foreign Ministers' Conference," 6 December 1955.

2. The statements concerning Berlin in these papers appeared in different estimative contexts and are consequently not exactly comparable. The first three estimates cited above considered Soviet policy in Berlin in the context of the anticipated Soviet response to West German rearmament. The latter estimate was made after West German rearmament had already begun, and after the attendant readjustment in Soviet policy had already become apparent in its main outlines.

3. We believe that all of those estimates were correct in their principal conclusion--that the USSR would be restrained in its actions in Berlin by fear of precipitating general war, and that it would not carry its pressure against the Western position to the point of provoking a major crisis. At the same time, we believe that the first three estimates were so expressed as to permit the inference that the immediate Soviet reaction to West German rearmament might include more severe pressures against Berlin than we now believe likely.

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